

Message Text

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SUBJECT: NATIONAL PARTY NATAL CONGRESS

1. SUMMARY: NATIONAL PARTY HELD FIRST OF FOUR SCHEDULED PROVINCIAL CONGRESSES IN DURBAN AUGUST 12-14. CONGEN DURBAN REPORTS THAT NATAL CONGRESS WAS UNUSUAL IN THAT DELEGATES WERE NOT AFFORDED, AS TRADITIONALLY IN PAST, MUCH OPPORTUNITY TO POSE QUESTIONS OR STATE VIEWS. INSTEAD, DELEGATES WERE TREATED TO A SUCCESSION OF SPEECHES BY CABINET MINISTERS DEVELOPING THE THEME OF NEED FOR CHANGE IN SOUTH AFRICAN DOMESTIC POLICY, BUT ALL WITHIN THE ESTABLISHED "SEPARATE DEVELOPMENT" CONTEXT. ENGLISH PRESS TENDED TO VIEW MINISTERS' TALKS AS BEGINNING OF MAJOR GOVERNMENT EFFORT TO PREPARE ITS SUPPORTERS FOR CHANGE, OR AT LEAST TEST REACTION TO POSSIBLE CHANGE. THIS MAY PROVE TO BE THE CASE BUT UNTIL THERE ARE SOME INDICATIONS OF STRUCTURAL CHANGES, ASSUMPTION MUST REMAIN THAT ANY CHANGES CONTEMPLATED WILL BE WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF SEPARATE DEVELOPMENT. PRETORIA 3616 AND 3618 DEAL WITH FONMIN MULLER'S REMARKS ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS TOPICS. END SUMMARY.

2. HIGHLIGHTS OF REMARKS BY NATIONAL PARTY MINISTERS:

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A. TONE OF MINISTERIAL REMARKS WAS SET BY MINISTER OF NATIONAL EDUCATION DR. PIET KOORNHOF. SPEAKING AT END OF DISCUSSION ON PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL PREPARATION OF S.A. SCHOOL-CHILDREN FOR TIMES OF CRISIS, KOORNHOF STATED "DRAMATIC ADJUSTMENTS WOULD HAVE TO BE MADE IN SOUTH AFRICA IF THE BATTLE FOR SURVIVAL WAS TO BE WON." KOORNHOF TURNED ASIDE CONGRESS RESOLUTION THAT ALL STUDENTS PARTICIPATING IN ILLEGAL DEMONSTRATIONS BE BANNED FROM CAMPUSES FOR FIVE YEARS, REASONING THAT UNIVERSITIES WERE AUTONOMOUS AND ILLEGAL ACTIVITY COULD BE DEALT WITH THROUGH NORMAL PROCESS OF LAW. HE NEVERTHELESS SAID STUDENT ACTIVITY WAS BEING CAREFULLY WATCHED AND SAG WOULD TAKE STRONG MEASURES AGAINST STUDENT UNREST IF NECESSARY TO DO SO.

B. MINISTER OF DEFENSE, P.W. BOTHA, TOLD CONGRESS THAT SOUTH AFRICA WOULD RUN INTO TROUBLE IF IT DID NOT ESTABLISH A STRONG MIDDLE CLASS AMONG ALL RACE GROUPS. ALSO, COUNTERING LONG-ESTABLISHED NATIONALIST PREDISPOSITION AGAINST ARMING BLACKS, BOTHA SAID HE WAS PREPARED TO INCLUDE AFRICANS, COLOREDS, AND INDIANS IN THE COMMANDO MILITIA IN ADDITION TO THOSE ALREADY SERVING IN ARMED FORCES.

C. MINISTER OF ECONOMIC AFFAIRS CHRIS HEUNIS SAID THAT GOOD RACE RELATIONS WERE CRUCIAL TO SOUTH AFRICA'S ECONOMY. THE ASPIRATIONS OF ALL RACES SHOULD BE MET, HE ADDED, AND THE KEY TO FUTURE ECONOMIC STABILITY LAY IN THE COUNTRY'S ABILITY TO ELIMINATE DISCRIMINATION.

D. DEPUTY MINISTER OF BANTU AFFAIRS WILLEM CRUYWAGEN USED CONGRESS AS PLATFORM TO INAUGURATE SAG'S CONTROVERSIAL 30-YEAR LEASE SCHEME FOR AFRICAN TOWNSHIP HOMEOWNERS. LEASES, TO BE VALUED AT HALF OF COMBINED ERECTION AND REPLACEMENT VALUE, CAN BE SOLD IMMEDIATELY BY TOWN BOARDS.

E. MINISTER OF MINES AND LABOR FANIE BOTHA CALLED FOR RE-INTRODUCTION OF FIVE-AND-A-HALF DAY WORK WEEK IF SOUTH AFRICA WAS TO WORK ITS WAY OUT OF ECONOMIC TROUBLE. BOTHA WAS REPLYING TO STATEMENT BY NAT. SENATOR HENDRIK KLOPPER WHO ASKED WHETHER SOUTH AFRICA COULD AFFORD FREE AND EASY LIFE AND IGNORE MINERS WHO RIGHTLY ASKED WHY THEY SHOULD BE ONLY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PEOPLE IN SA TO WORK A 48-HOUR, SIX-DAY WEEK.

F. FOREIGN MINISTER MULLER SPOKE ON SOUTH AFRICA'S FOREIGN RELATIONS PROBLEMS (PRETORIA SEPTTEL).

G. MINISTER OF INFORMATION, DR. CONNIE MULDER, STATED THAT ASKING FOR RADICAL CHANGE IN SOUTH AFRICA WAS "QUITE UNCALLED FOR." HE, HOWEVER, ACKNOWLEDGED THAT BLACK GRIEVANCES EXIST

AND THAT WHITES WOULD HAVE TO ACT CONSIDERATELY TOWARD PEOPLE OF OTHER RACES "NO MATTER HOW GREAT THE PROVOCATION."

H. KEY SPEECH WAS DELIVERED BY MINISTER OF JUSTICE JIMMY KRUGER. KRUGER MADE CLEAR THAT SAG WAS DETERMINED TO DEAL FORCEFULLY WITH ANY FURTHER UNREST AND WARNED BLACKS TO BEWARE OF "COMMUNIST AND BLACK POWER AGITATION" WHICH HE SAID WOULD LEAD THEM INTO CONFRONTATION THEY COULD NOT WIN. AT SAME TIME KRUGER SAID A NEW DEAL WAS REQUIRED FOR THE "80 PER CENT" OF BLACKS, COLOREDS AND ASIANS WHO DID NOT SUPPORT VIOLENCE. HE CONCEDED THAT THE SAG IN PAST HAD MADE MISTAKES WHICH HAD TO BE PUT RIGHT AND THAT POLITICAL ASPIRATIONS OF BLACK GROUPS WOULD HAVE TO BE MET "NO MATTER HOW DIFFICULT". KRUGER SAW FUTURE SAG ACTION, HOWEVER, NOT AS CHANGE OF DIRECTION BUT "CHANGING TO A FASTER GEAR." IN A LATER INTERVIEW HE ANNOUNCED THAT BLACK TOWNSHIPS COULD HAVE THEIR OWN POLICE AND TOWNSHIP COURTS "BEFORE THE END OF THE YEAR."

3. TWO ISSUES PROVOKED HARD-LINE NAT. REACTION DURING CONGRESS:

A. THERON REPORT. AFTER AN OPENING DAY ROW WHEN A NAT. DELEGATE, MR. TOS PIENAAR, TRIED TO AIR THE COLORED ISSUE DURING AN OPEN-DOOR SESSION, NATIONAL PARTY LEADERS ACTED TO STIFLE ALL PUBLIC DEBATE WITHIN THE PARTY. THE PARTY'S FEDERAL COUNCIL ON THE THERON COMMISSION ISSUED A REPORT URGING ALL MEMBERS TO REFRAIN FROM ACTION AND STATEMENTS "WHICH COULD CAUSE TENSION." THE REPORT WAS ADOPTED UNANIMOUSLY BY THE NATAL PARTY CONGRESS AFTER CLOSED-DOOR DISCUSSION.

B. INFORMATION MINISTER MULDER LASHED OUT AT THE PRESS FOR SHOWING WHAT HE DESCRIBED AS "IRRESPONSIBILITY AND EMOTIONAL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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NALISM" IN ITS COVERAGE OF DISTURBANCES IN SOWETO AND ELSEWHERE. HE SINGLED OUT THE DURBAN DAILY NEWS FOR MISINTERPRETING THE SPEECH OF FOREIGN MINISTER MULLER AND DECLARED: "THE PRESS WILL HAVE TO BE CURBED." THE LATTER REMARK IS CONSTRUED AS THE CLOSEST SUGGESTION YET THAT THE NATS MIGHT MOVE TO CURB THE IRRITATING (TO THEM) ENGLISH LANGUAGE PRESS, PARTICULARLY IN NATAL.

4. ALTHOUGH ENGLISH PRESS CONSENSUS, FROM ARTICLES AND PERSONAL OPINIONS EXPRESSED TO CONGEN DURBAN AND EMB POL COUNS, TOOK VIEW THAT NATAL CONGRESS MARKED BEGINNING OF CAMPAIGN BY NAT LEADERS TO FORCE PARTY RANK AND FILE TO RETHINK BASIC ISSUES FACING S.A. WHITES, PRESSMEN MAY BE READING MORE INTO STATEMENTS THAN THEY ACTUALLY MERIT. "ACTING CONSIDERATELY TOWARD OTHER RACES," "ELIMINATING DISCRIMINATION," AND "NOT

ALTERING DIRECTION BUT CHANGING TO FASTER GEAR" HAVE,
AFTER ALL, BEEN GOVERNMENT LINE FOR SOME TIME. IT REMAINS
POSSIBLE THAT GOVERNMENT IS USING PARTY CONGRESSES TO TEST
REACTIONS OF SUPPORTERS TO POSSIBLE FUTURE CONCESSIONS OR
SOFTER LINE TO HELP DETERMINE HOW FAR IT CAN GO IN DEALING
WITH PRESSURES GENERATED BY SOWETO AND ITS AFTERMATH. MORE
CONVINCING EVIDENCE THAN NOW EXISTS OF GOVERNMENT INTENTIONS
IS NEEDED BEFORE ACCEPTING THE ENGLISH PRESS OPTIMISM. AS
THE NP PROVINCIAL CONGRESSES UNFOLD OVER THE NEXT FEW WEEKS
WE MAY GET A CLEARER VIEW OF WHAT THE SAG HAS IN MIND.
BOWDLER

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